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# NEWS LETTER



**Seeing  
is  
Believing**

## POLL OF WAR VIEWS IN 2500 CHURCHES

Congregational and Christian  
Leaders Expect 300,000  
Persons to Reply.

By the Associated Press.  
 NEW YORK, Oct. 25.—The Council for Social Action of the Congregational and Christian Churches of America, in a nation-wide poll planned for the week ending Armistice Sunday, Nov. 10, expects to get the first factual information ever obtained on what Christian people of the United States are thinking about war.

Pointed questions are contained in the ballots sent this week to 2500 Congregational and Christian churches in all 48 states, to which responses from 300,000 persons are

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This pattern, he says, had not provided either secure jobs or regular incomes for steel workers. For example, about 200,000

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# SOCIAL ACTION

Published by the Council for Social Action of the  
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# Seeing Is Believing

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“SEEING IS BELIEVING.” Facts seldom lay hold of the imagination until people see for themselves the conditions from which they grow, until they participate in the experience which makes them significant.

Theoretically today many good churchmen deplore farm tenancy, unemployment, child labor. But their efforts to alleviate the conditions which produce these things are likely to be in direct proportion to their contact with them. Unemployment is mildly distressing on the front pages of the newspaper. But to have one's relatives without work, oneself without a means of livelihood—such experiences make unemployment stark, an immediate problem which cannot be postponed. Child labor for someone else's children, off in a strange city, holds little of the misery which stalks the heart when one's own children go into the factory, the quarry, or the street trades.

Acting upon this fundamental human experience that seeing is believing—thinking, talking, acting—an increasing number of church members make it their business to go forth from their accustomed routine to *see*. Even when they see nothing of which they have not already heard, something happens to their understanding. In the strange alchemy of personality, when an individual shares his neighbor's experience he becomes his brother's keeper.

## Better Housing

One reason that our government has undertaken a better housing program is because living conditions are intolerable for a portion of our population; their wages will not pay sufficient rent to guarantee fair interest on the capital investment of the landlord. But another reason that our government has undertaken a widespread housing program is because women's

clubs, parent-teacher associations, service groups, church groups have helped to survey local situations and raised their concerted voices in honest demand. Housing which violates the laws of health is a physical and social menace to the whole community. Housing which vitiates the growth of human beings—"physical, mental, spiritual"—negates the principle of democracy.

## Newark Sees Itself

A group of New Jersey church women went out to see for themselves the housing conditions of the Negroes of Newark. Commenting upon the *Harrison apartments*, which have been built by the Prudential Insurance Company of America, they write:

The houses being built on the sidewalk line leave what would normally be yard space to be beautifully parked by the city. We found every convenience—clean, bright, cheerful rooms with the number of apartments ranging from 2 rooms to 5. We received a feeling of real joy in going over the various types of apartments available to colored people under this apartment housing plan, recognizing always that these had been built by an organization which must receive profits for its undertaking. We also realized that this project in no sense relieves the slum problem or relieves the real congestion for colored people in the city of Newark.

It was a depressing contrast to go from there to a *small frame home* housing two families who were being helped by the Relief Funds of Newark. We mounted the rickety steps with fear. A stairway so narrow it barely permitted a person to go up—a balustrade with only an occasional spoke to support it—into a tiny hallway and then into a three-room apartment. Two were fairly good sized rooms with a window in each room, brown paper instead of window panes in too many places, and a third room barely large enough to contain a cot bed with no window in it at all. A widowed father and five little children lived in this apartment. There is a cold water faucet in this apartment and in the one below, and one outdoor toilet for



both families. And for this bleak, dreary, dilapidated place \$12 of Relief money is being spent for a monthly rental.

It made us ashamed to be citizens of a city and a state where such conditions could exist, side by side with the beauty and the comfort of the Harrison apartments which we had just visited. Heartsick and with deep concern we are still puzzling our minds as to a constructive way to help in such a situation—which we realize by driving through street after street is typical of many. When some questions were asked about the laws of the Board of Health in connection with such property, we found that there was so much congestion and need for housing among the poor Negroes of Newark that the Board of Health had had to suspend many of their laws just to get people in from out-of-doors. We feel that we must do something if it is humanly possible. We also feel that we must take time to do the right thing, and we are conscious that there are so many things that we do not understand. (signed) MANTIE R. H. BROWN

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## The United States Housing Act of 1937

On August 21 Congress passed the United States Housing Act of 1937. It recognizes three vital facts: that housing is a grave national problem; that private industry does not find low-cost housing profitable; and that state and municipal governments cannot afford to build housing for the poor.

The P.W.A. projects in 35 cities, wholly financed and constructed by the federal government, were demonstration projects to show the possibilities of low-rent housing.

The Housing Act in developing a long-range policy, however, places major responsibility for the housing program in the hands of local housing authorities. The fact that 31 states passed enabling acts for the creation of such authorities prior to the passage of the Housing Act illustrates the national interest in and demand for public housing.

The Act provides three types of financial aid for local housing authorities: loans, capital grants, and annual contributions.

The plans of the New York City Housing Authority as announced on September 10, illustrates how the Act will work. Langdon Post, chairman of the Authority, outlined 4 housing projects to house an estimated 8,000 slum families, at a cost of \$44,000,000. As soon as a federal administrator is appointed by the President, the Authority will apply for a loan of \$40,000,000, which is 80 per cent of the total amount available for New York State. The city must match this \$40,000,000 with \$4,000,000 in order to get the loan. If the loan is made, the local authority will build and manage the housing units, relying upon the federal contributions to keep the rents low.

The Housing Act is the most significant piece of housing legislation to be passed in this country, even though it hardly begins to meet the housing need. (It has been estimated that it would cost \$30,000,000,000 to abolish the nation's slums.) A more adequate program depends upon the popularization of this program. One practical way to stimulate interest is to find out what housing authorities exist in your own state, what plans they have for housing projects, what they are doing to obtain a share of the funds that will soon be available.

## A State Committee Reports on a Strike

“IN MAY employees of a large laundry in New Jersey went out on strike. Many persons first learned about the dispute by reading the paid advertisements which the company published in the press.

“Since many church members throughout northern New Jersey were customers of the laundry and naturally desirous of knowing whether the company was taking a fair stand in the controversy, the Committee for Social Action of the Middle Atlantic Conference (New Jersey Area) requested interviews with both the company and the strikers, to the end that each



side might make known to the delegation its version of the issues in dispute.

"The strikers accepted the offer, but the company refused. The Committee decided anyway to send its delegation to the strikers. A report was then prepared on the basis of that material and the company's published statements and circulated among the pastors and a selected list of women leaders in the churches of the conference.

"A copy of the report was in due course sent to the laundry, as a result of which the way was opened to an interview with members of a plant union, newly formed, and a representative of the management. The notes taken were shown to the persons interviewed and also to the strikers, and formed the basis for a second and more complete report of the whole situation.

"Both reports attempted an impartial statement of the facts and issues. Where there was disagreement between the company and the strikers, that fact was properly noted. The situation was a delicate one because the union had become a C.I.O. affiliate two days after the strike began.

"The Committee believes that its own experience may be of value to others who may wish to undertake the same sort of project. It notes several useful items of procedure. First, the confirmation of the accuracy of its notes by sending them to the persons interviewed. Secondly, sending the proposed report to the Council for Social Action for advice from its lawyers as to whether the Committee could be sued for libel. Thirdly, the decision to withhold the reports from newspaper publication, for the reason that the Committee was eager in its first venture of this sort to avoid the sort of publicity which might antagonize some churches. Fourthly, confining its comments to a statement of the two possible opposed points of view rather than voicing a Committee judgment on the issues of the strike.

"Copies of the second report may be had by writing to Fred S. Hall, Chairman, Committee for Social Action, Middle Atlantic Conference, 44 Brick Church Plaza, East Orange, New Jersey."

## The United States and the Far East

### Shall We Be Neutral?

WHAT shall be the American policy towards the war—undeclared but no less real—between China and Japan? We have a stake in it. We are a party to the Nine-Power-Treaty guaranteeing the integrity of China. We have nationals and property in China, endangered by Japan's high-handed course. What shall we do?

The President on September 15 announced that American owned boats could carry no armaments. Insistent voices demand that the government invoke the Neutrality Act in its full force. Peace advocates are divided as to the wisest course. Some ask that the Administration go all the way on neutrality, and stop all trading with both nations. Others demand collective pressure upon Japan.

The issue posed by the present controversy is clear. Everyone wants peace. The President wants peace. But will we get it by following the course of strict neutrality, or will we get it by joining with other nations in implementing the Nine-Power Treaty.

This division of opinion can hardly be resolved. The advocates of neutrality legislation insist that the United States should treat all belligerents equally and that it should refrain from joining in a program of sanctions against an aggressor nation. Others support the League of Nations principle that when war breaks out the aggressor should be penalized through joint action expressing itself in economic and perhaps in military sanctions. The present divided mind with regard to United States policy in Asia is largely a reflection of this difference in basic philosophy.

The argument runs after this wise: Those who advocate invoking the Neutrality Act insist that this "undeclared war" in Asia is a "state of war" in the meaning of the act; that the probable interference of Japan with American shipping may



lead to such "incidents" as involved us in the World War; that it is wiser to invoke the law before such incidents arise. Supporters of the act see in Asia a prelude to world war, and believe that now is the time to make our stand clear, cost what it may.

On the other hand, the proponents of a more positive course towards Japan argue: Japan is the aggressor, and should be brought to time; the hope of peace lies in collective action against Japan; we cannot afford to give Japan, Germany and Italy the impression that the world's democracies have abdicated, thereby encouraging them to fresh attacks upon weaker peoples.

The Council for Social Action has taken no official stand on this issue. However, it urges all to register their opinions in Washington by writing to the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, and to their Congressmen.

## The Social Action Program: November

THE tradition of Armistice Day sets the pattern for the social action program in November. This is the month for turning the minds of all your church membership toward the perplexities and the hope for world peace.

### Peace Education

Your first responsibility is toward the groups already at hand: the Church School, the Sunday or mid-week congregation, the young people's society, the women's association, the men's club.

Varied approaches must obviously be made to such different groups. The needs of some groups can often best be met through providing a well-informed speaker. For other groups perhaps a debate: "Resolved: That the United States should invoke the Neutrality Act in the Far East." Or the panel discussion, a round-table airing of the views of perhaps five persons, ably guided by a chairman into defining and defending opposing points of view on some controversial subject. Then there are the study courses for all age groups.

Discussion and argument are basic if we are to know what the real issues of war and peace are. Yet unless we can find ways to dramatize the struggle for peace we may lose the emotional element which is so real a part of the problem. Therefore, try one or more of the following projects.

*A Peace Exhibit.* The simplest and easiest thing to do is to make an effective display of posters, pamphlets, books and flags. A series of five attractive posters in color, size 16½ by 20 inches, can be secured from the National Council for the Prevention of War, 532—17th St., N. W., Washington, D. C., price 10c. each. World Peaceways, 103 Park Avenue, New York City, is an even more fruitful source for posters. From these two organizations you can also procure new peace literature for sale or for free distribution. Your local library may be able to loan you books on the Far East, neutrality, international affairs. If you really want to—very much—you can make an exhibit which will actually help to form public opinion.

An alternative exhibit is a *World Trade Map*, made by your group, showing how foreign trade links your town or state with the rest of the world. As part of your exhibit you may display articles which your community imports—such as coffee, silk, rubber—as well as articles which its factories produce for export. We discover that peace-mindedness grows as we come to understand the world's economic interdependence.

*A Peace Play.* This is an appropriate way of presenting the peace issue in the assembly period of your Church School, in your young people's society, at your mid-week meeting or at a church supper. For a list of plays and pageants, each adequately described so that you know exactly what you are in for, write the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, enclosing 10c. Also remember the Prize Peace Play of our Social Action Contest, "The Things That Are Caesar's" by Dorothy Clarke Wilson, published by Baker and Company, 178 Tremont Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts, no royalty.



## World Economic Cooperation

Peace study may begin in November but it cannot end there—if we are to win peace for our nation and world. This means that the Social Action Committee—and here is another reason why your church needs such a committee—should lay plans for year-round cooperation with the peace agencies organized into the National Peace Conference. Under their leadership a fifteen-months campaign for world economic cooperation is being inaugurated, its purpose being to discover and support the economic policies, national and international, which will lead toward peace.

Interestingly, this emphasis of the peace movement upon the problems of foreign trade gears right in with one of the subjects to be dealt with in our Economic Plebiscite. Balloting on the Economic Plebiscite in the fall of 1938 will actually coincide with the final phase of this "economics and peace" campaign. Thus, churches can deal with the economic issues both from the point of view of social justice and of world peace.

The basic handbook for this campaign is the newest Headline Book of the Foreign Policy Association, "Peaceful Change—An Alternative to War," 10c. (with additional discussion materials and study outline, 25c.). It is obtainable through our office.

## The Local Peace Council

If your community boasts a peace council, your church should be represented on it. If not, your task may be to help organize one with your friends from other churches and from organizations like service clubs, women's clubs, lodges and cooperatives. If you want to know more about these peace councils, we will send you an informative booklet free.

*An Armistice Day Service for Peace*, by Tracy D. Mygatt will appear October 1, 1937, in *The Churchman*, 425 Fourth Avenue, New York City. A dramatic liturgical service in which clergy and young people may participate in dedication to war resistance and disarmament.

## Let's Play

By FERRY L. PLATT

OUT in Fairmont, Nebraska, the men are learning to play together.

Fairmont — population 800 — is located in the most fertile part of the state. But for the last seventeen years income has been low on Nebraska farms. There have been crop failures on account of drouth *for the past three seasons*. Fairmont does not even support a movie theater any more.

But the men of Fairmont are learning to play together.

Last fall Rev. Isaac Cassel, the pastor of the Federated Church, Congregational and Presbyterian, planned to expand his recreation program to include adults. He and the Methodist minister, the only other minister in town, issued a united invitation to the married men of the community to share in a "Mystery Party." They were asked to bring sandwiches and were told that coffee would be furnished. As soon as four men arrived, they were set at a game of shuffle. Seven lanes, accommodating twenty-eight men, were soon in use. The late-comers were surprised to see so much fun. The game was new. Everybody liked it.

Shuffle will not solve all of Fairmont's problems, as these men know. The men meet once a month, play, sing and eat together. When all are in a friendly spirit, they give some time to the discussion of community needs and resources. Out of these discussions has grown a community organization. Soft Ball Teams have been organized. Other proposals have been given consideration. The most pretentious is a community house.

Three times in recent years commercial movies have failed in Fairmont. Fairmont theater-goers can fill the movie house only about once a week. But the Fairmont men have now found a firm which will rent a sound-equipped narrow-gauge



projector and commercial features from the large producers, on narrow gauge sound films. *They are giving consideration to the opening of a movie house on a cooperative basis.* They will show only once a week; they are not concerned about annual profits. This venture will depend somewhat on the crop conditions this season. Since they will use only 40 or 50 pictures a year, they can choose only the best. The projector will be available for educational films which churches, the school or clubs may wish to show. Again the people are planning to supply their own opportunities for recreation.

But what do such efforts in rural communities have to do with social action?

In the first place, recreation is a serious need in many rural communities and can be met only by some such cooperative action. In the second place, people in these ventures are experiencing some of the things social actionists theorize about. There is the experience of community-wide fellowship. Then there is the experience of tasting and seeing fruits of cooperation, and shortcomings of competition, at least at one point.

There is also the experience of unexpected resources for a richer life. Some folks in Fairmont have heard about the prophesied economy of abundance. But the prophecy sounds fantastic. In Fairmont's county, the tenantry rate is above that for the South as a whole. In Fairmont, the business men have a struggle to keep their credit good at the wholesale houses. A lot of people doubt whether Fairmont can offer its people any more satisfying life. But here has come "shuffle." Here may come a movie theater. They are not gifts of some wealthy Santa Claus. The people have picked them right out of the air, by reaching for them *together*. Maybe some other riches are hanging within reach of their united group.

Again, what does this have to do with social action?

It is a first step, a short step. But it may lead far if a wise interpreter is near to show the next steps and the direction in which the trail leads.

## The New Hampshire Congregational-Christian Reading Contest

"When church women say they haven't time to take on church activities, that they aren't well enough informed to teach in Church School, or to take part in programs or in positions of leadership, or when they can't leave small children and home to attend meetings, we answer in New Hampshire that we have one activity in which everyone is urged to participate—our State Reading Contest.

"This activity was started in 1928 as a project of the Department of Women's Work, under its Social Action Chairman, Mrs. Lucius Thayer. At the time of her death, it had grown so rapidly that it was taken over by the State Conference, the list of books to be compiled and the promotion of the contest to be handled by a committee appointed by the trustees and accountable to them. This committee is composed of 2 University professors, 4 ministers, 1 bookstore owner, 2 ministers' wives, and 1 laywoman.

"The list is made up of 'stimulating books representative of the trend of modern literature in its highest level.'

"The churches of the state are divided into four membership groups, so that each church competes merely with others of similar size. Credit is given for the largest number of readers, the largest number of books read, and the largest number of young people and men reading, aiming

thereby to interest all groups within the church. Awards for each year's reading are books from the next year's list, so that the reading interest is kept up.

"The Public Library Commission and State Librarians cooperate in urging local libraries to buy from our Reading List. Many libraries write us for advance copies of the list, for they say that it has done much to encourage the reading of non-fiction and better books. In addition to this, the State Conference office has a library of books (some purchased and some loaned) which they mail to individuals or groups wishing them.

"Last year (1936) 61 churches had 1,153 readers (70 young people, 136 men and the rest women), and 18,009 books were actually reported as read by qualified readers. Many others read indiscriminately from the lists but never reported their reading. Therefore, we feel that the results justify the time and effort put into this activity in our churches. We believe that our figures help us see where promotion is needed to encourage reading.

"The Committee is always glad to help groups of individuals interested in similar reading contests elsewhere. Such inquiries should be addressed to Reading Chairman, 85 N. State Street, Concord, New Hampshire."


MYRNA E. BUSCHMEYER





## They Say

This month's comments are confined to Hugh Vernon White's pamphlet **CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION**. By the time the pamphlet had been in the mails *three days* (before they were all delivered) we had enough comments *to fill the entire issue of this magazine*.



ROGER W. BABSON, Moderator of the General Council of Congregational-Christian Churches: "This pamphlet by Hugh Vernon White entitled *Christian Social Action* should be read by every layman of the Congregational-Christian Church. It is sane, sound and searching."

BOYNTON MERRILL, Pastor of the Second Congregational Church, Newton, Massachusetts: "Thank you for letting me see the proofs of Dr. White's pamphlet. It is the finest resume of

the background, nature and objectives of the Church's stake in our chaotic American scene that I have ever read. No wonder you are enthusiastic about it. It will win (or should) the sympathy and help of many who have been browbeaten by less honest and less inspiring "propaganda." This is teaching of a high order. It lifts the work of the Council onto a very high level and we who must always look up to leaders who see clearly and far will look to Dr. White for more help as together we seek to be obedient to the heavenly vision. Gratefully,—"

Dr. Frank M. Sheldon, Grand Avenue Congregational Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: "As would be expected by those of us who know our good friend White, it has insight, vitality, balance, comprehension and progress. White is one of our new leaders of constructive ability and power."

Mrs. E. J. Newcomer, Social Action Secretary, Yakima, Washington: (Air mail) "Yesterday I read most of the pamphlet through twice. This morning while my husband and four young people were gathered here on the lawn, I produced the pamphlet and the church trustee (my husband) read the whole thing aloud. It caused some discussion and everyone thought it was very good."

Don M. Douglass, Social Action Chairman, Des Moines, Iowa: "In the brief time that has elapsed I have read the article twice, and am exceedingly impressed with it. To my mind, something of this kind is needed imperatively at the present time."

Orville C. Jones, State Social Action Chairman, Cleveland, Ohio: "I heartily share your enthusiasm for it. Not one word would I change. It is a truly brilliant statement of a theology for social action."

Harry C. Munro, Director of Field Administration, International Council of Religious Education, Chicago, Illinois: "I think the pamphlet will be timely and will meet a definite need. Probably much of our thinking on these social issues is on altogether too superficial a foundation. I like the historical setting given in the statement."

Lawrence Wilson, Pastor Pioneer Congregational Church, Sacramento, California: "I am afraid that it will almost prove popular. But I am not too fearful of any popularity which Dr. White achieves, for it is never gained at any sacrifice of essential convictions. He states the case for each interested party with such fairness, clearness and incisiveness that I would imagine that some of them would be aghast at the plainness with which their positions are made to stand forth."

Mrs. E. A. Read, President of the Iowa Federation of Congregational-Christian women, Shenandoah: "Reading Mr. White's pamphlet was a privilege for which I am grateful. It is extremely interesting and forceful. I knew it would be when I saw the name of the author. . . . It merits wide distribution and I hope it can be managed financially."

Mr. Joseph Artman, General Secretary of the Religious Education Association, Chicago Illinois: "I think that he might bring out in even stronger form the fact that the church's job is to state the values for life. And this means *life*, no matter what phases it may find itself in. It may be in recreation, it may be in the life of the family, it may be in the professions, it may be in industry and business, it may be in labor."

Ronald J. Tamblin, Pastor of First Congregational Church, Holyoke, Massachusetts: "I have long wished for a larger use of the very excellent material found in "Social Action" among the members of my congregation. This undoubtedly will be facilitated by Mr. White's introduction of "Christian Social Action." Therefore, I am writing to place an order for fifty copies of this issue."

# Test Your Knowledge on Housing

## The General Situation

1. How many Americans are said to be "inadequately housed," according to minimum standards for good housing which have been set by social workers?
2. Why do people live in slums and blighted areas?
3. Is there any relation between housing and neighborhood conditions and the rate of disease, death, delinquency and crime?
4. What is the government public housing program, as contained in the recently enacted Wagner-Steagall Housing Bill, designed to accomplish?

## Your Own Community

5. Are there any slums or bad housing conditions in your community?
6. What rents do people who live in badly congested sections pay? Could they afford to pay more? Is better housing available at the rentals they can pay?
7. What racial groups live in congested areas? Why?
8. Do your town records show a greater prevalence of disease, death, delinquency and crime in slum areas?
9. Is there any government housing in your neighborhood?
10. What is the attitude of local real estate operators and builders toward a public housing program?
11. What groups or agencies in your community are working for better housing conditions?
12. Is there a Housing Authority in your state government?
13. Are any of your church membership "inadequately housed?"

**BETTER HOUSING, by Alfred Schmalz**

**RURAL LIFE, by Ferry Platt**

These packets contain complete material for a six weeks' study course, including study outline, worship services, resource materials in form of reprints and pamphlets.